



Refugee immunization by IOM nurse in Mae Sot, Tak. © IOM 2021



IOM THAILAND MIGRATION HEALTH

Since 1999, IOM has been working closely in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in responding to the challenges of public health and migration. With the aim of improving health knowledge, awareness, practices and access among migrants as well as their Thai host communities, IOM supports the MoPH in promoting migrant-inclusive policies that address migration-related health vulnerabilities. This partnership was further enhanced in 2019 where a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to increase access to healthcare among migrants and vulnerable communities.

IOM delivers and promotes preventive and curative health programmes in Thailand which are beneficial, accessible and equitable for migrants and mobile populations. A comprehensive approach is taken in addressing public health risks which helps to mitigate and eliminate the impact of communicable diseases, protect migrants and host communities and enhance national health capacity and social services.

IOM is particularly active in the areas of tuberculosis (TB) detection and COVID-19 prevention and has extensive experience in conducting health assessments and implementing behaviour change campaigns. Through its own network of health assessment centres and laboratories, IOM also provides extensive health services to migrants and refugees such as medical screenings (including laboratory diagnostics, immunization and treatment) and psychosocial assistance so that they can travel and remain healthy throughout their stay in Thailand and abroad.

LOCATIONS OF IOM PROJECTS WITH HEALTH COMPONENTS



HEALTH PROMOTION AND ASSISTANCE



Provision of relief packages by World Vision Foundation of Thailand (WVFT) in Mae Sot, Tak. © WVFT 2021



MHV's Training organized by WVFT in Bangkok. © WVFT 2022



MHV's supporting COVID-19 vaccination programme in Mae Sot, Tak. © WVFT 2021

In its continued effort to leave no one behind, IOM's interventions aim to include migrants and host communities in the response and recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing increasing equitable access to healthcare and relevant information while addressing the significant gaps in vulnerable populations in Thailand. IOM's Migration Health Department has been working closely with governmental counterparts and implementing partners to assist remote migrant communities and mobile populations deal with the challenges of preventing and combatting the spread of COVID-19, with strong advocacy to put in place migrant-inclusive policies in Thailand.

In response to COVID-19 transmission, IOM completed a programme to



Facilitate case finding, testing, and treatment among at-risk migrant workers



Deliver health education on COVID-19 prevention in migrant languages



Support migrants in need during quarantine with the provision of care packages including food and non-food items, hygiene kits, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Antigen Test Kits (ATKs).

At present, IOM supports the Royal Thai Government's (RTG) national COVID-19 vaccination rollout efforts, which engage the assistance of trained migrant health workers and volunteers to improve vaccine accessibility and strengthen communications among migrants, resulting in a better understanding of the vaccine's benefits and potential adverse effects following immunization (AEFI) and better access to vaccination centers.

In addition, IOM also reviews existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and emergency responses to COVID-19 in collaboration with provincial health offices in border provinces and facilitates tabletop exercises to clarify responsibilities and responses in emergency situations, as well as ensure the continued improvement of disease surveillance.

In the area of tuberculosis (TB) response, IOM works on addressing the TB detection and diagnosis through active case finding in targeted temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border with further treatment for needed cases. Through its Migration Health Assessment Center, IOM undertakes screening activities, referrals, and treatment response monitoring. On a different front, with the support from Community Health Workers, targeted populations are to be assisted in accessing healthcare and treatment, as well as health literacy and associated information in GMS languages.

HEALTH ASSESSMENTS AND TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

In the context of pre-migration health activities (PMHA) and travel assistance, IOM carries out Migration Health Assessments (MHA) for various categories of refugees and migrants either before departure or upon arrival to reduce and manage the potential public health impact of human mobility on migrants, receiving countries and communities. At the request of receiving country governments, mainly the Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States of America, IOM provides refugees and migrants with physical and mental health evaluations to assist them with resettlement, international employment, receiving of temporary or permanent visas, or enrolment in specific migrant assistance programmes. Pre-migration health activities are comprehensive in nature and consist of an evaluation of the physical and mental health status of migrants prior to departure from Thailand with special attention to medical conditions of public health concern. Pre-departure travel health services include providing presumptive treatment for endemic conditions like malaria, parasite infestation, diagnostics and treatment for tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, and RT-PCR testing to rule out COVID-19 prior to departure.

IOM also provides immunization to migrants against vaccine-preventable diseases and offers an array of specialized counselling services. All assessments are conducted by a team of over 40 medical professionals. IOM operates two laboratories in Mae Sot and Bangkok that can perform advanced diagnostics, including molecular testing for TB and COVID-19 testing, and process significant numbers of various testing through partnership with a number of laboratories and hospitals in Thailand.



Swab specimen collection of migrants in Mae Sot Sub-office for COVID-19 testing.
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Laboratory technician in Bangkok performing the RT-PCR test for COVID-19. © IOM 2021

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